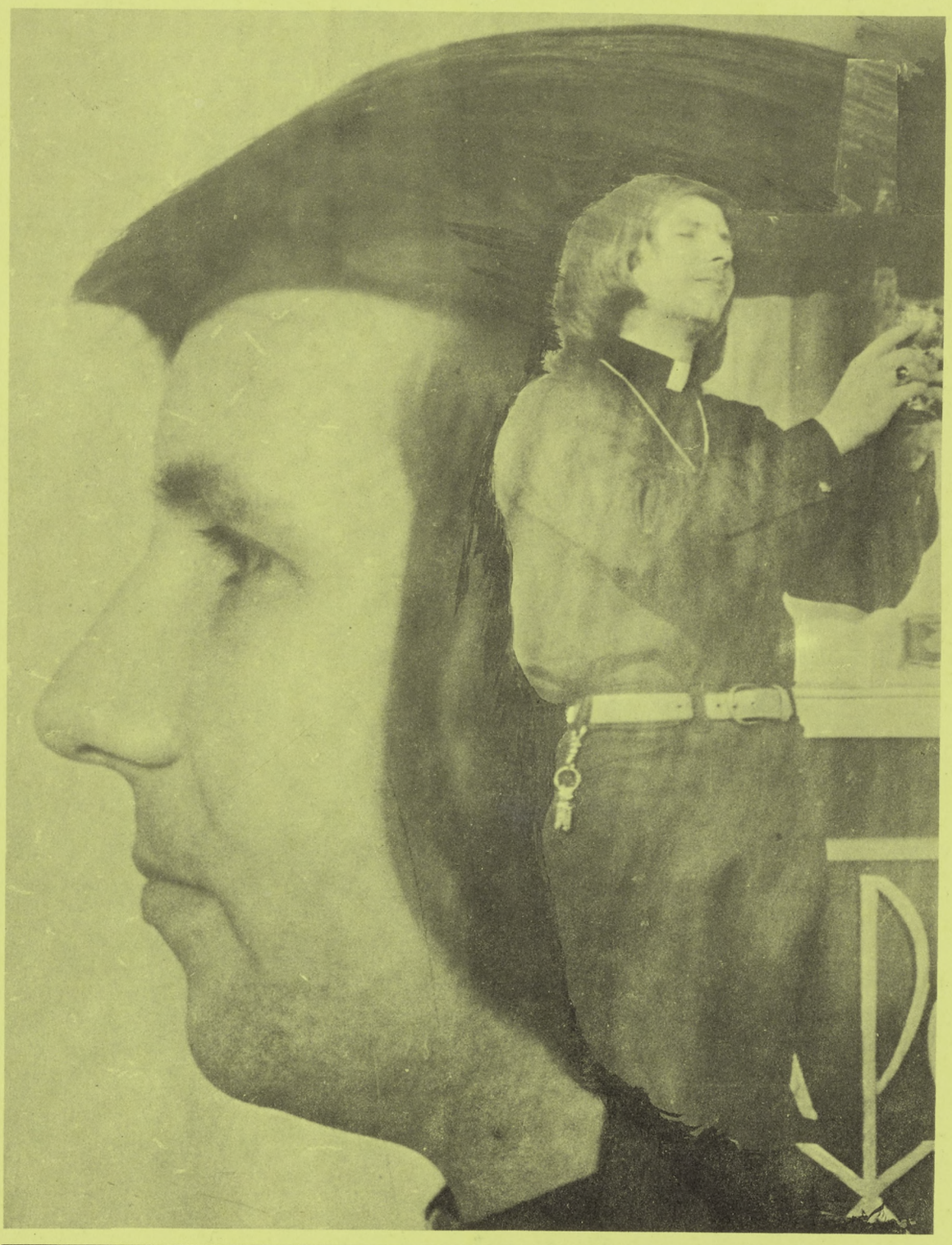
APRIL 1974

IN UNITY



SPECIAL ISSUE: THE MINISTRY

A MINISTRY FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN

Editor's Note: The following is an outline of suggestions from Rev. Nancy Wilson for a ministry to and by women. It is reprinted with permission from *The Gay Christian.*

1. *Female Leadership*
   a. *Women need to be visible in key positions in worship, committees, and other activities.*
   b. *In the absence of female clergy, encourage women in lay ministry.*
2. *Support Groups*
   a. *Begin with women's rap. The agenda can be flexible: discussion of general issues of lesbianism, coming out, etc. Discuss relationship to church, religious issues. Create an atmosphere of trust, sharing, support. Group can become an idea group, give feedback for MCC, a core group of women from which to draw leadership.*
   b. *Lesbian mothers' group. A particularly important issue. Church may provide child care.*
   c. *Couples' group or social activities for couples. This could easily become a male /female group.*
   d. *Group for elderly women.*
3. *Integration*
   a. *Start a growth group, with an equal number of men and women, for the purpose of male-female dialogue, perhaps limiting it to 10 sessions. Discuss sexual, religious, social, political, and personal issues. Graduates of the first group might become leaders of similar groups later.*
   b. *Women in leadership (again!). It may seem artificial to try to place at least one woman on every committee in the church, but I think it most necessary.*
   c. *Start groups that appeal in style and activities to both sexes.*
4. *Feminism in worship.*
   a. *Make concrete changes in language and style of the worship service that women will always be included.*
   b. *Use feminist liturgies. I am collecting some and will make that collection available soon. For a packet on women's worship materials, write: Helen Pollock, 3931 Kings Highway, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11234. The cost is 50 cents.*
   c. *Rate hymns according to their degree of sexism. Use new, non-sexist versions of older ones.*
   d. *Develop bibliographies and resource materials on women and the church.*
5. *Special events.*
   a. *Women's festivals or open house. All-day activities sponsored and run by MCC women where women in the community can share talents in art, music and poetry.*
   b. *Dinners, film festivals.*
   c. *Feminist speakers.*
   d. *Cooperate with other lesbian organizations in sponsoring special events. Be sensitive in not competing with other women's activities in your area.*
6. *Outreach.*
   a. *Cooperate with other women's activities in your area.*
   b. *Use community events.*
   c. *Put posters and flyers in women's bars. Do personal witnessing in the bars.*
   d. *Advertise in women's publications.*
   e. *Establish contact with prisons, women's rehabilitation centers, YWCA, social workers, welfare departments, welfare mothers' groups, etc.*
7. *Create nonsexist church image*
   a. *All the above suggestions will contribute.*
   b. *Pay attention to church symbols. Invent new symbols expressing ecumenicity and nonsexist attitudes.*
   c. *Be sensitive in all publications to include female perspectives.*
   d. *Think and talk in terms of women in the ministry —*

(Continued on page 11)

As I become more and more involved with MCC, and in a ministry to lesbians, certain things are becoming increasingly clear. I would like to share some of my thoughts in the hope of receiving feedback and support.

Through my work, I come into contact with many women in our community. As I do so, I am kept aware that the majority of these women are extremely turned off to the church and to Christianity. They have no intention, at least at the present, of becoming involved in MCC, because they are conscious of the ways in which Christianity, as part of a patriarchal tradition, has so oppressed them. They are skeptical — even cynical — about our attempts at reform. Changing a few words, adding "sisters" now and then, is not enough — or at least that's what I hear.

So I find myself ministering to MCC, but also ministering to a community of women who see themselves on the periphery, or even outside the church entirely. Many women in our community perceive me in a "pastoral" role and ask me, and MCC women, to minister to their needs. And they yet cannot (without being hypocrites by their own standards) join our church fellowship.

This situation tends to make someone in my position — as a minister and an MCC-identified woman — feel torn in two directions. It also creates some resentment among MCCers, who keep asking why these women will not join us and wonder why I spend so much time ministering to them. I understand this resentment; sometimes I share it. I also feel the pain of my sisters. For some rejecting the church has been a personal and political necessity in terms of recovering their integrity and sense of self-worth.

The Gospel, in its essence, is not patriarchal. This I believe with all my being. However, the expression, symbolization, and institutionalization of that Gospel has been male-oriented and male dominated and oppressive to women. We cannot ignore or escape that fact. We are faced with the necessity of revolutionizing the church at all levels — or we risk the further oppression and alienation of half the world's population, which is a perversion of the Gospel. The situation is that serious.

Meanwhile, women in MCC, and MCC itself, will have to live in tension, ministering to those within and without its fellowship. In this, as in all things, let us ask for God's help and grace.

WOMEN IN ♀ TENSION

Rev. Nancy Wilson
MCC Boston
Reprinted from The Gay Christian, January 1974

IN UNITY

The Magazine of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

Volume IV, No. 2 April 1974

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Photo Credit: Pp. 5, 9, 10 and cover, Tom Taylor

THINGS TO COME

In July we'll give you a sneak preview of **SF:1974**. We'll give you an inside look at what you'll find at the Fifth Annual UFMCC General Conference. We'll not only let you know what to expect at the conference but we'll take a look at San Francisco herself, and what you can expect there. You won't want to miss this one. The October issue will be a picture report on what happened in San Francisco. Those who attended will want this one as a souvenir and those who were unable to make it will want one to learn what they missed. We plan to tell it like it is.

WE APOLOGIZE

The photo credits for the January issue were inadvertently omitted. All the photographs last issue, excepting the photograph of the Elders on page 2 were taken by Dick Rayl, member of MCC Los Angeles. We apologize for the error and want to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Rayl for the fine photographs.

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THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

The Ministry Is Featured

This issue of **IN UNITY** focuses in on the ministry. We have taken a look at the professional ministry — those who have chosen to work full time in the service for Christ. We could just as well have looked at the lay ministry, for in a sense we are all ministers of Christ. Maybe we'll zero in on this aspect of the ministry in a future issue.

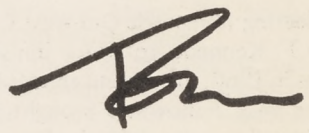
The need for trained, qualified and dedicated leadership in a rapidly expanding church is always critical. UFMCC expansion has come, and continues to come, so rapidly it is difficult to find enough ministers to do the work.

There have been many bright and talented women and men who have answered the call and who now serve long hours, some without pay. They, in turn, have been assisted by an able and dedicated laity. It is the two, working together, which make the task possible.

The one great advantage to editing this magazine is the number of really wonderful people I meet. In spite of their own heavy work load, most have responded admirably when I have requested copy. To them I am eternally grateful.

The fellowship will continue to prosper as long as it can continue to draw talented leaders and dedicated members and as long as it keeps God's banner in front.

It is His leadership; his guidance; and His love that makes it all possible. We are just His tools; His instruments. What success we accomplish is really His and lives we win are most certainly His.



FEEDBACK

We appreciated hearing from many of you on the first issue. This feedback is most important to the success of this magazine. We cannot work in a vacuum. If we are to succeed in making this a magazine in which we can all find pride; if we succeed in making it a tool we can all use to win others to Christ; if we succeed in making it an international voice of the Fellowship, it will only be because we worked together. The magazine staff needs your comments (even if it is a simple "You're doing a great job", or "Ugh! It's suited only for the bottom of bird cages.") Maybe something's bothering you and you wish to speak out; maybe you have a point to make on one of the articles printed. Write! Let us hear from you. We promise to read every letter we receive. There are a few ground rules we must make. We will *not* publish any anonymous letters. We will withhold the name, if requested, but the letter must be initially signed. Letters without constructive criticism, either good or bad will not be considered for print, nor will personal attack on churches, their ministers, staff or individual members. Letters seeking information will be forwarded to the individual or department which can answer your inquiries.

JAMES JARMAN
Director of Evangelism
MCC New York

EASTERN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

A FAMILY REUNION

Meeting in historic Old West Church in Boston, Mass., where John F. Kennedy voted for himself as President of the United States in 1960, the second annual Eastern Ministers' Conference of the MCC Fellowship brought 30 ministers from east of the Mississippi together with the Board of Elders for a freewheeling discussion about the shape and future of the MCC mission in this, its sixth year.

The conference began the evening of March 8, with a service of worship. Moderator Troy Perry, delivered the sermon, addressing himself to a variety of concerns which had been raised across the fellowship. "But we are going to stand together," he said to vigorous 'Amens.' "Nothing is going to divide us, for we are a family in MCC, and the family lives together lovingly."

Friday evening also featured a frank and moving discussion of situations encountered in pastoral counselling led by Elder John Hose. Several ministers spoke of the personal strains they felt as gay people trying to maintain one-to-one relationships in the face of taxing demands on the ministry. "The divorce rate of the fellowship clergy ought to be a matter of concern to us all," said the Rev. Joseph Gilbert, director of MCC's National Prison Ministry.

In response to a request for information on experience in developing alternate gay lifestyles, Elder James Sandmire described the Zion Family program of the San Francisco church. He said 70 per cent of the members are organized into "family caring units" meeting together at least once a month for dinner, The program involves couples, single people, and persons of both sexes.

"We do not say to other churches, 'You should do this,' " Sandmire reported. "We merely say 'This has worked well in our community. Perhaps it might help you.' "

As an example of the sort of thing the Zion families are involved with, he described a disaster contingency plan they had worked out with food and water supplies (a matter of some concern in earthquake vulnerable San Francisco).

"The Zion families do not live together, but they covenant with one another to maintain contact during the week on a regular basis, so that no one who wants human fellowship need be isolated," he said.

On Saturday morning, the ministers held a dynamic and wide-ranging "Rap with the Elders" which ran on into the early afternoon. Topics touched upon included fellowship finances; the need to maintain effective, supportive links of communication, particularly when local churches face moments of stress; and the problem of geographical distances – particularly in the Middle West where, at the present time, the nearest MCC may be hundreds of miles away.

The group also discussed points raised in a letter drawn up by the Rev. Howard Wells, pastor of MCC Brooklyn, New York, which addressed several concerns of churches of the Northeast District. In the paper, Wells – who was not present – said, "To tell a parishioner to 'Love God and do your own thing as long as you don't hurt anyone else' is copping out on our responsibility to relate the Gospel to the spiritual and social needs of our community."

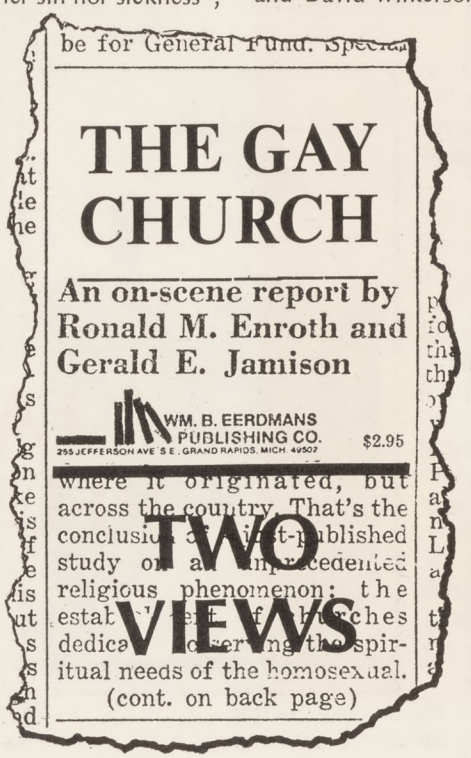
(Continued on page 11)

TWO VIEWS

1 REV. ROY BIRCHARD
MCC NEW YORK

Despite *Publisher's Weekly*'s blurb calling **The Gay Church** "surprisingly good and objective", the knowledgeable reader will soon commence to question the "scientific" pretensions of this "sociology."

The book, however, should not be dismissed as unimportant. Its respected evangelical publisher ensures a wide distribution. For if last year the United Presbyterian *Trends* magazine proposed to its audience that homosexuality was "neither sin nor sickness", **The Gay Church** focuses attention on a phenomenon the publisher suspects may "prove startling and even disturbing to the established straight church" (sometimes known as viewing-with-alarm).


be for General Fund. Special
THE GAY CHURCH
An on-scene report by Ronald M. Enroth and Gerald E. Jamison
WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E., GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. 49502
$2.95
where it originated, but across the country. That's the conclusi
study on a
religious phenomenon: the
estab
dedica
ering the spir-
itual needs of the homosexual.
(cont. on back page)

The book grew out of a sociology class at Westmond College in California, and, according to the authors, involved a year-and-a-half study of the MCC Fellowhips and a three-month intensive study of MCC San Francisco. On their behalf, it must be said that for neophytes, Enroth and Jamison have been thorough. One is impressed by the great dollops of direct quotation from a wide variety of MCC publications. (All that free reprinting!) And they have obviously made an effort to cover much of the turf of the American gay religious community – recounting the ordination of Bill Johnson, the formation of Dignity, delving into the adventures of "Bishop" Mikhail Itkin, as well as carrying out their main task, an overview of the rise of MCC.

After a while, one forms a picture of academics closeted in a room somewhere, laboriously poring over *The Catalyst*, *In Unity*, and *The Gay Christian*. Such flattering attention to our modest efforts! Trial balloons and tentative projects long flown away into journalistic night are here brought back as though these scholars were retrieving the fragile scrolls of the homosexual equivalent of the *Protocals of the Elders of Zion*, while the myth of the Homintern hovers, Phoenix-like in the background.

Indeed, one looks into the future with a shudder, seeing already the parade of Ph.D. dissertations bearing titles like "The Etiology of Paper Priests" and "The Significance of Capitalization in the Writings of the Rev. Keith Delano Davis."

Perhaps most scholars lose sight of the forest for the trees. But one *does* have a sense that wandering agog in Sodom, Enroth and Jamison lack comprehension of the experimentation, the give-and-take of a burgeoning religious movement. Thus they do not see the relative significance or insignificance of the passing scene they try to describe.

Another limitation is the authors' self-admitted lack of religious expertise. Thus they can speak of the "fundamental background of the Baptist church," when describing the liberal American Baptist Church. And remark that "the United Methodist Church was expected to be at the vanguard of homosexual liberation." (As was the AFL-CIO perhaps?)

So too, in their chapter on the Bible, they mix serious exegesis by gay theologians with a recounting of a gay Cain-Abel story they picked up somewhere and the supposed healing of a "gay centurion". One is reminded of the genteel, romantic Bible novels of one's youth – *Ben Hur, Dear and Glorious Physician*, etc. From what further shore of the gay world did they gather in these daydreams? (For at this point their scholarly apparatus of footnotes quite disappears).

In the final chapter aptly titled "Keeping A Straight Face" Enroth and Jamison lay aside the mask of the "value-free" sociologist. Pointing to the schism of MCC Denver and falsely quoting this writer as being among "frustrated gay religious liberals," they summon up stormy portents for the future of MCC:

> its theology has led the gay church into a *cul-de-sac* where, despite itself, it has become associated with the encircling gay world [sic] . . . Christians who value orthodoxy and who are rationally committed to the Bible as the infallible Word of God, the only rule of faith and practice, cannot be expected to dismiss lightly what Klaus Bockmuhl has called the 'fantastic exegetic somersaults' gay churchmen have perpetuated in order to support their position (*Christianity Today*, February 16, 1973, p. 17).

The judgments of Karl Barth, evangelical theologian Carl Henry, and David Wilkerson's magazine *The Cross and the Switchblade*, are sounded. For Enroth and Jamison return finally from their safari into *terra esoterica* to embrace "the body of evidence from the experience of humanity and from the biblical record that points to the conclusion that God ordained a heterosexual lifestyle for mankind culminating and being perpetuated in the man-woman relationship." (pp 139-140). *(Continued on page 11)*

2 REV. RICHARD PLOEN
ELDER

What future is there for a school for training ministers of a denomination that has been accused of having no theologians, whose theological position is untenable and who by its own writings make it a social adjunct to the gay sub-culture? The new book **The Gay Church**, draws these and other conclusions about the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

Well researched and documented, the book hits hard at the many facets of the Universal Fellowship. While the conslusions it comes to are pretty hard to swallow, we painfully realize that for the most part, we have our own selves to blame. The book quotes liberally from the newsletters of all the churches.

Perhaps this book may serve to jog us into pulling together to solve these problems and shortcomings. For we are going to need all the best minds and efforts to come up with the solutions.

Your denomination's educational institution is desirous of meeting the needs educationally of those who wish to improve their knowledge. By our very existence we are providing a meeting place for good minds and educators. Yet we are very small and relatively poor. We can only do what we are able through our limited resources and personnel. It will come as a surprise to some to learn that we have no full time personnel and that the staff is volunteer.

With this fact in mind, we wish to serve notice that this school wishes to do all it can to answer the charges that have been leveled at UFMCC. We welcome to our ranks those who are theologically trained and have expertise in the field. The future is challenging, but no less great than the day the first MCC service was held.

The Trustees of the Seminary have already geared for better training our clergy. They have revised the curriculum in an attempt to provide the best possible classes in our "crash program." There will be no change in the classes being held in the evening and a three-year graduation requirement.

The Board of Trustees, recently voted to change the name from Seminary to Bible School. It was felt that this more clearly describes the school as it presently functions. Incorporation processes have been started and now can be finalized.

What future is there for Samaritan Bible School? More than ever it can rally the theologically trained and provide the proper perspective and principals for the course we must follow. We want to help and we will need your support.

WOLFE HONORED; AIRS COMPLAINT

The Toronto Star, which had forbidden use of the word 'gay' in its advertising, now carries an ad addressed to 'Gay Christians' in its classified section. The change was brought about by a media furor started Feb. 5 by Rev. Bob Wolfe, pastor of the Toronto Church. Wolfe, given an opportunity to address the City Council during a ceremony honoring him for his recent efforts in talking a youth down from the roof of the 27-story City Hall, used it to advantage.

Notified January 29, about the ceremony before the Council, Wolfe attempted to place the ad the next day. He was aware the Star had recently turned down an ad for 'Gay Information and Distress Service' proposed by the Community Homophile Association of Toronto. The Church ad was refused at three levels in the classified department and then bucked to the Advertising Policy Committee. The Policy Committee responded in writing that the Star did not "accept advertising from a group, an individual or an organization whose message was directed towards a specific segment of society. This policy is designed to reject advertising which would identify or tend to identify persons as homosexuals. This could be considered as libelous and could also result in embarassment to individuals and their families . . . We do not believe that fulfilling this role requires us, either logically or ethically, to accept advertising which we believe would be distasteful to our readership in general."

In thanking Mayor David Crombie and the Council for the award, Wolfe told them, "We hope to bring our church's message of hope to our brothers and sisters. There are obstacles; we hope to overcome them. It perplexes me that the day you have asked me to come before you is the same day that I received a letter from your largest newspaper saying that they will not allow me to buy advertising to tell my brothers and sisters that there is a ministry for them here, and that if they begin to lose hope, we'll try to give them hope . . .

Media reaction was immediate and strong, with stories in all three Toronto papers, including the *Star*. Television carried the award ceremony, stressing the citation inscription:

"The community at large looks with justifiable respect and affection . . . "

There were several taped TV and radio interviews as an enraged press, including the *Star's* own editorial department took up the battle, for a "specific segment" of society to have the right to communicate with its members.

At 2 p.m., February 7, Norm Kirk, the Star's advertising director called the church.

"As you might know, Rev. Wolfe, the purpose of my call is to apologize to you and to your church for the letter you received, and to inform you that if you still wish the ad to be published, we certainly will in the future accept your advertising."

In the Saturday, February 9 *Star*, in the personal want ads, the following appeared:

"Gay Christians are invited to worship with Metropolitan Community Church Sundays at 8:00 p.m. in Holy Trinity Church. 364-9799.

REV. BONNIE DANIEL
West Bay MCC

Discipleship

(Reprinted from *Agape*, March 1974)

Jesus once said, "If anyone comes to me and does not put me before his father, mother, sisters and brothers, he cannot be my disciple."

Christ demanded absolute renunciation of family ties from His most intimate disciples. Christ placed spiritual well-being first, stressing we should resist the influence of relatives and friends whenever that influence was detrimental to our spiritual lives.

Christ doesn't tell us to live the life of a hermit or a monk; but He does insist we put Him before all else.

We often go to church only if we have nothing else to do, or if our friends are going to be there. We worship God because it is expected of us, not because we love Him and want to tell Him so. Enthusiasm for MCC does not make us Christians, nor does being a

The Toronto Star C METRO NEWS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 1974

Minister and fireman rescue boy from suicide on City Hall roof

A Toronto fireman and a clergyman who dreads heights spent 90 minutes talking a 16-year-old boy out of jumping 326 feet from the top of City Hall yesterday.

About 1,000 people who gathered below during the evening rush hour caught glimpses of the youth teetering on the icy, windswept rim of the east tower or sitting with his legs dangling over the 18-inch perch.

A few onlookers joked about the life-or-death drama, and one man in his early 20's shouted up, "I hope you get up some guts, and jump!"

But the vast majority were tense and silent as, hidden from their view, Platoon Chief Edward Robinson and Rev. Robert Wolfe of Metropolitan Community Church stood on the roof talking to the trembling boy.

None of their arguments and promises worked until the fireman persuaded the youth that the minister was half-frozen.

Wolfe, 47, confided later that he is "terrified" of heights.

"But I was intent on what needed to be done," he said. "I was praying awful hard that nothing would happen to him. My Friend answered my prayer."

Robinson, 59, who has helped rescue many people from fires in his 34-year career and prevented a man from hanging himself in Allan Gardens last summer, called it a "harrowing experience,"

Both were praised by Metro Police Inspector George McGowan. "They should be commended for their outstanding courage," he said. "It was a frightening sight. I really expected the boy to come toppling down."

Police and firemen had life nets ready, but realized they would be almost useless.

"That wouldn't have done any good if he jumped," one fireman said. "A 150 pound man jumping 100 feet equals a thrust of 16 tons."

The drama began about 4 p.m. when a City Hall security man, discovered the youth and heard him threaten to jump. Asked if he had any friends he would like to see, the boy gave him Wolfe's telephone number.

"Steve has been attending services at my church, and we have had discussions," the minister said. "I never expected this."

Wolfe and Robinson took an elevator up 27 storeys, then walked two flights of stairs to approach the boy.

They talked to him in "a nice, quiet, calm way" about his problems, Robinson said, but the youth never revealed why he was considering suicide.

"It was cold and windy up there and it was getting dark," the platoon chief said. "He was on the ledge with his feet hanging over the side 10 or 12 times.

The kid was shaking so badly I thought he'd lose his balance."

Robinson saw a ray of hope when the boy accepted a cup of coffee and continued to talk.

"I figured the longer we kept talking, the more chance we had of making him change his mind.

"We promised him everything – the moon. I kept urging him to go down and talk the whole thing over."

The boy was unmoved when it was suggested his family would be ashamed of him.

"I think the thing that did it was my urging him to help his minister, who was getting stiff with the cold," Robinson said.

The boy came to them quietly then and was taken to the Queen St. W. Mental Health. Centre. Wolfe also promised him help to "get his life started off again in the right direction."

"Myself, I'm a bit shaky, the minister said. "I'm going to go home and fall to pieces."

minister, deacon, board member, or any other office the church wishes to give us. To be a Christian, we must pick up our cross and follow Him no matter how heavy the load or how far it may take us from where we think we want to be.

God's ways are not our ways. God's time is not our time. You can be very sure, however, God's plan for our lives is much better than anything we could dream up for ourselves. We always think we know what's best for us and end up in predicaments from which only God can free us. How much less pain and suffering we would have if we would learn to yield to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus got all His strength and power from the Spirit. After he had turned the small amount of fish and bread into enough food to feed 5,000, He left to be alone with God. His disciples left in a boat, leaving Him on shore. He walked on the water to them. The miracle was not in feeding the 5,000 or walking on water. The miracle was that God gave Jesus the power to do these things. In both cases, Jesus spent time alone with God in prayer. He escaped the crowds long enough to replenish the Spiritual power which had been drawn from Him.

We so often need power and strength to make it through one week; yet we fail to spend time alone with God, the source of all strength. It takes discipline and daily prayer to be a disciple. Rome wasn't built in a day and neither is a strong Spirit-filled Christian. Changes in our lives can occur only if we want them, and only if we are willing to work them about. We must surrender our lives to Him to be called Christians. It is time we started acting Christ-like.

The cost of discipleship is not cheap. He asks for our lives. In exchange, He will give us a peace beyond our understanding. In losing our lives, we gain His. Jesus, living in us, is what discipleship is all about.

God said, "Be still and know that I am God." Are we still enough to feel His presence; still enough to feel His power within us; still enough to know He cares and will provide for us in a far better way than anything we could provide; still enough to be called Christian?

After all, isn't that enough?

REV. GARY WILSON
MCC OAKLAND

THE GAY CHRISTIAN

A NEW SPIRIT

REV. TOM TAYLOR
MCC SACRAMENTO

I recently ran into a group of gay ministers talking about love and understanding. They said they belonged to something called the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. I had never heard of it, but listenin' to 'em was a really heavy trip.

Now I ain't much on religion and even less on this homo bit, but what they were sayin' really made sense – it really grabbed me. It wasn't so much what they were sayin', it was the way they acted – like they *really* believed it.

This all happened around the end of January in San Diego. It was early on Friday evening and I had to run down to the corner store for a pack of cigarettes. The fog, bad off-and-on all day, had finally turned all-bad.

I had to pass by the Chollas View Methodist Church on the way to the store. I noticed something happening there, but paid no attention to it until I started back.

I knew something was up when I I spotted several women in clerical collars. I was curious, never having seen a woman preacher.

The fog was gettin' worse and it looked like they were breakin' up anyway.

There was even more activity the next mornin' and I was surprised at the number of women in collars.

Me, I'm nosey. I can't help it. One of these day's it's going t' git me into real trouble. I've learned the only way to keep my nose from twitchin' is to go after the facts.

It seems I had stumbled onto the western ministers' conference of this UFMCC. It turns out they have 57 congregations in some 26 states and two foreign countries.

They invited me to attend some of the workshops so I could get a better understanding of what they preached. I accepted the offer, having nothing to do that morning.

Of course, if I had known they were into this gay thing, I would've said 'no' and got the hell out of there. They were talking about growing up and the trouble it was causing. Nothing frightening about this, I thought. Every new group goes through this.

This here big fellow, they called him "Papa John", said something that bowled me over and I started looking for the door. "The only thing we had in common was our homosexuality," he said, describing the formation of their church five years before.

At the word 'homosexuality', I wanted to get up and leave, but the next line stopped me. "We've stopped playing church and started living it," he said. The theological differences lost in the first few years' euphoria of discovering "God Loves Us," is wearing off, this grey-haired dude from San Francisco agreed. "We're going beyond that and trying to find what God wants us to do with our lives. Once the euphoria wears off," he continued, "the differences come to the front.

"We have to be very careful not to impose our will," a bearded fellow from Dallas warned.

"We have to be more loving," a round-faced man from Los Angeles said quietly. I found out later, he was the one that began the whole thing back in 1968.

"We don't need to compete," one of the women from Santa Barbara, I think, said. "Too damn much work out there!"

"Don't run down my church or my pastor," one stately elderly gentleman cried. "When you run down my church, you hurt me."

I don't know what happened. I only know I wasn't afraid of these people anymore. They didn't seem like perverts; they certainly didn't act queer. I could feel their compassion and love.

I recalled something the one called Troy had said earlier. "There is nothing so lonely as being alone." I realized these people had been there and weren't willing to go back.

After their workshop I spoke to some of the ministers. These people some of whose personal backgrounds spanned the many denominations and sects active today, had been discussing issues which had split the Christian Church originally. And, strangely enough, I felt *they* were putting it together again.

As I said, I don't know much about religion, but I think they are practicing God's Love the way it was meant to be practiced.

No, I don't mean the sex bit. I discovered that has nothing to do with it. It's their *attitude* towards themselves and others. Their *compassion*, their *willingness to reach out, to accept without question*, and their *willingness to care.* Take me, for instance. They didn't ask me if I was gay. No one made a pass at me. They accepted me as a person, right off the street.

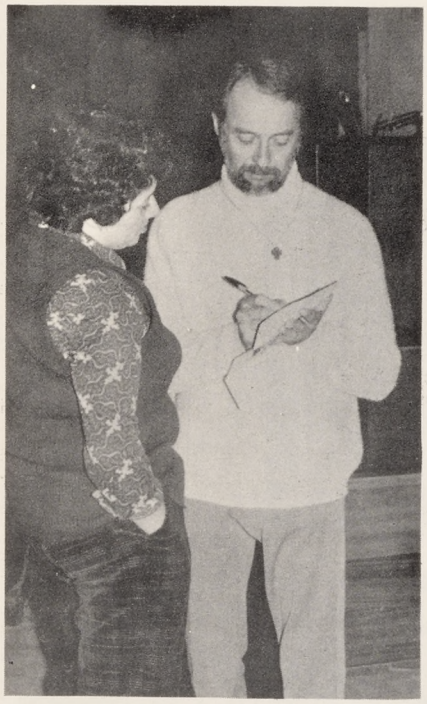
I've heard all that stuff about homosexuality being a bummer and that all queers are damned. I'm not so sure after that Saturday. If we had more Christians like those I met, this ol' world would certainly be a better place.

During the afternoon session, the gent from San Francisco outlined a two-year program to expand the church. Most of the details really didn't interest me too much. The plan was ambitious, and it sounded to me like this MCC means to stay around.

"We are not just Gay people; we are Christian," this young dude from Seattle asserted, during the discussion.

(Continued on page 10)

We share at the table
and individually . . .

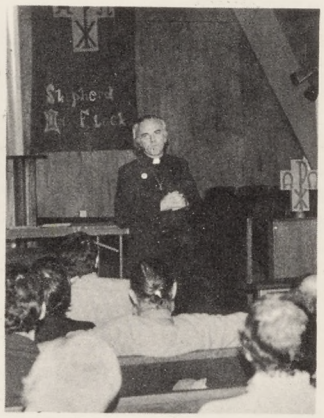


Western Ministers Confab + San Diego

We give
of
ourselves
and
our money . . .

All of us can grow whiskers.

. . . and more



A NEW SPIRIT *(Continued from page 8)*

Another warned the group to "Never become so narrow we try to channel the river."

Something happened during a discussion of tithing that made me realize, more than anything else, that these people were going to make it work.

One of the woman ministers, I think she was from Venice, California, said she was going to take up an offering when she learned the Fellowship treasury had $57 in it. Those ministers, traveling on a shoe-string, some, gave over $200.

A blond woman from Sacramento outlined plans for women in MCC. Sexism, she noted, is a cultural problem, not quite so prevalent within MCC. "Pray that God moves in our lives," she said, "that persons can come not knowing Christ and leave fully committed to Him."

I've thought a lot about this, since that weekend, and I'm convinced the rest of the Christian world, hell – the rest of the world period!, needs to look at itself and examine its position on homosexuality with the same love and desire for understanding that I saw in that group.

I have to reexamine myself in the light of what I found and I've come to a greater understanding of where I'm at.

I'm not gay, but I want the same kind of love and understanding that these people have. The young woman I go with and I have been attending services at the local MCC congregation for the past several weeks, and I'm learning.

A MINISTRY BY AND FOR WOMEN

(Continued from page 2)

both professional and lay.

d. Emphasize an image of MCC as having a unique possibility and responsibility overcoming traditional church sexism.

8. Resources.
   a. Be in touch with secular feminist literature.
   b. Be in touch with women in MCC and other churches in other geographical areas. Particularly:

Rev. Freda Smith
21949 - 13th Avenue, Sacramento, Ca. 95820
Rev. B. J. McDaniels
MCC Cincinnati (Mission)
Box 20083, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220
Rev. Bonnie Daniel
West Bay MCC
20 Brooks Avenue, Venice, Ca. 90291
Rev. Valerie Valrejean
Box 1323, Seattle, Washington 98112
Rev. Nancy L. Wilson
MCC Boston
Room 408, Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

THE GAY CHURCH / TWO VIEWS *(continued)*

To their credit, it must be said that Enroth and Jamison have been successful in gathering together in one place all the accumulated false starts, feuds, excesses and follies of the past five years in the gay religious movement. One wonders if there is any pathology they have left uncovered! But they have brought before us mistakes we surely must learn from.

"Bishop Mikhail Itkin, the "paper priests", the "provocative, yet tasteful" issue of MCC San Francisco's *Cross-Currents*, the *Prodigal's* self-designation as "an organ of Christian outreach" – all of these factors we must contend with, regardless of our private opinions about them. Enroth and Jamison warn us that we had better decide how we are going to present ourselves to the rest of the world. The ultimate question that faces us is: If Gay is Good, is *everything* that calls itself Gay good? If not, how do we distinguish?

Enroth and Jamison underscore something that has grown increasingly clear to us since we published our "Gay Morality" issue of the *Gay Christian* last summer. If we in MCC do not address ourselves to the development of a constructive, loving lifestyle for gays and seriously seek to bring the insights of the gospel to bear on the life of our community, *others will seek to do the job for us.* Sometimes these "others" will be schismatics from our own ranks; at other times they may be scientists" and "theologians" who regard us, as do Enroth and Jamison, as a "deviant, cultic aggregate." (p. 115).

Looking at MCC, Enroth and Jamison see a vessel of wrath; from our necessarily different perspective – tested as we are continuously by the strains and storms of an emerging community – we see the Apostle's "earthen vessel." And we are reminded of the Lord's response to the Apostle who prayed that the thorn might be removed from his flesh: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (II Corinthians 12:9.)

I believe there is a Christian spirit among us that eludes them, and I think no clearer instance of this is available than the evident astonishment they show that *any* gay women at all are to be found in the MCC churches. For if we are bound together by lust, what possible attraction can there be between male homosexuals and lesbians?

It is because I believe I can perceive this spirit, among us that I feel we can successfully address ourselves to the issues which Enroth and Jamison raise. We do not need to cultivate our paranoia about the challenges of articulating a Gay Christian lifestyle, but we need to recognize that Gay people *do* come to us seeking spiritual and moral guidance and help in developing their own lives. If we have no fuller teachings to offer than: "Love God; love yourself; love other people"; and "Do your own thing," these people *will* find other teachers.

There is a fine, moving, genuine spiritual yearning on the part of Gay people to find out the good, to seek out the Spirit of God at work in the world. Such a hunger for righteousness is altogether natural and laudable. In the days ahead, we must devote ourselves to prayer, study, meditation and honest discussion among ourselves in our churches. We must seek out guidance for those "who hunger and thirst for righteousness. For they *shall* be satisfied."

—Reprinted from *The Gay Christian*, March-April 1974

A FAMILY REUNION *(Continued from page 4)*

Moderator Perry, following the discussion, spoke out of his own experience as founder and pastor of MCC Los Angeles and, more recently, as interim pastor of MCC Philadelphia. "Yes, I *do* preach morality," he said. "I say it is wrong to use force or violence on others . . . rape. It is wrong to exploit minors, little children. I think we're all agreed on that. And I have some definite questions about inflicting pain on other people. I think we are called to love, and when I'm asked, I preach that."

"But," he said, "I don't want to see us getting tangled up in writing new codes of do's and dont's – the sort of thing I used to deal with in counselling teenagers when I was a young pastor. Like, shall we say it is immoral to go to the movies, but it's all right to own a TV . . . and two years after the movies come out, we can see them on the TV! Or debates on questions like, 'Shall Church of God Women Wear Open-Toed Shoes?' I don't want to see MCC get tangled up in that. I call that 'Majoring in Minors.' "

Pastors from the northeast explained to their colleagues how, given their distance from the west coast and their lack of a resident elder, combined with their own relative geographic closeness, that their churches had developed a stronger district consciousness than might be the case in other parts of the country. All, however, stressed that despite these various factors, there was general satisfaction with the current fellowship by-laws.

"Nobody wants to go through another session with the by-laws like we did in Atlanta this past year," said the Rev. Roy Birchard of MCC New York. "It's a case of our being sensitive to each other and the dynamics of our life together as we grow. It will take time for us to flesh out the denominational structures which we have set up. There are many questions we will want to discuss in the Standing Committee on Fellowship Faith and Order."

Other concerns which the ministers dealt with included a healthy theological and geographical balance on the Ministerial Credentials and Affairs Committee, setting forth criteria the committee employs, and dealing with the question of, on the one hand, placing MCC members in "mainline" theological seminaries – a pattern developing in Atlanta and the northeast – and, on the other hand, concentrating energies and funds on developing the Samaritan Bible School in its efforts to work toward accreditation as a seminary.

Saturday afternoon saw a cheerful and energetic airing of the question "Sexism in the Church" led by Elder Freda Smith, the Rev. Nancy Wilson of Boston, the Rev. B. J. McDaniels of Cincinnati and the Rev. Charles Larson of Tampa, Florida. Great variety from community to community around the country was apparent as MCCs sought to involve women and advance them speedily into leadership positions. Overall, though, Elder Smith said, "I have seen terrific progress since I first started coming to MCC meetings like this."

In the evening, ministers witnessed the holy union of two members of MCC Boston, Don Frost and Tom Skayhan, and then moved downstairs where Elder Richard Ploen led a moving candlelight Agape celebration, telling the history of the Eucharist from scripture while accompanied by a capella singing. It was a fitting and beautiful conclusion to a weekend of sharing and fellowship.

For this observer, it was a first opportunity to witness a national MCC meeting. It was obvious from the first scheduled session that the Elders had not come to lecture but to share, to be inspired as well as to inspire.

A denomination at work? Yes, but it was also like a family reunion. In the hallways, during the meeting breaks, over the dinner tables, in front of the Old West Methodist Church, wherever a few of our ministers found an opportunity, they renewed old memories, asked about old friends, introduced themselves to newcomers, and shared pastoral experiences. It was in these unstructured and unplanned meetings that one could truly sense that MCC is a united fellowship. A newcomer to this pioneering Christian fellowship could reasonable be assured that indeed, "God Cares, and So Does MCC. . . "

SAMARITAN BIBLE SCHOOL

Preparing for God's Work!

Consider attending Samaritan Bible School!

Samaritan Bible School, formerly Samaritan Bible Seminary was begun for the purpose of training men and women for Christian Service. This includes education for service in Christian education, on Church Boards, as deacons and exhorters, as well as training for the preaching ministry.

The idea of a school began in the minds and hearts of Troy D. Perry and Richard A. Ploen. Their dream was to help meet the pressing need in the call for helpers coming from all over the country. This meant a program that would be short and not expensive. They planned an evening school so students who needed to support themselves could serve at a time when they would be free.

John Hose decided to write a paper on such a school for his Master's degree. Some of his suggestions for curriculum were used for the original course of study. Two large rooms in the Parsonage were allocated to this program for classrooms. Rev. Ploen has his office located adjacent to the classrooms as part of his living quarters in the building.

Interested people donated funds for the purchase of desk-chairs, others donated a chalk board, lectern and a large tapestry of the Last Supper. Classes began in the fall of 1970 with the Revs. Ploen and Hose as the first instructors.

School Trustees have revised the curriculum so that introductory courses are offered the first year and the more advanced work, such as practice of preaching and pastoral counseling are offered in the second and third years. Courses are scheduled so that students take at least one class in an area of the Bible each quarter. At least one class each quarter is usually a practical method class.

Some of the classes are combined this year, providing a time each week when the entire group of students can meet together.

Because there was a feeling that 'Seminary' inferred a graduate program to train those who intended to preach, the Trustees changed the school's name. Spring quarter classes are taught by Rev. Roger Harrison of the Costa Mesa Church, Rev. Don Pederson, Minister of Christian Education at the Los Angeles Church, Rev. John Rowe, pastor of the Church in the Valley and Rev. Ploen, Dean of the School.

Applications and inquiries are now being received for the new year starting in the Fall of 1974. An applicant must have completed high school or equivalent, have a recommendation from his or her pastor, complete application procedures and have a personal interview. A brochure is available to describe the school and classes offered.

The new school now has complete new space for the library, classrooms and offices. A brochure and application will be sent upon request. Write to: Dean Richard Ploen, Samaritan Bible School, 1050 South Hill Street, Los Angeles, California 90015

THREE YEAR PLAN TO CHURCH LEADERSHIP

FIRST YEAR

FALL
Personal Preparation of the Minister
General Psychology
Introduction to The Bible

WINTER
English Composition
World Civilization
Life of Christ

SPRING
Journeys of Paul
Exegetical Method
Public Speaking

SECOND YEAR

FALL
Survey of the Old Testament
History of the Christian Church
Pastoral Counseling

WINTER
Survey of the New Testament
Pastoral Care
History of Christian Thought

SPRING
The Johannine Gospel
Ethical Christian Problems
Book of Romans

THIRD YEAR

FALL
Comparative Theology
Church Administration & Education
Book of Romans

WINTER
The Message of the Prophets
The Theology of Preaching
Problems in the U.F.M.C.C. Ministry

SPRING
The Epistles
Modern Cults
Practice of Preaching

Note: The Course of Study is currently being studied for revision.